FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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A Wilderness Experience

Evelyn Underhill, one of the great mystics of the twentieth century, once wrote that "a mind distracted by the many cannot comprehend the One. Hence something equivalent to the wilderness is an essential part" of spiritual education. This means that each of us needs a time of solitude, silence, and rest to fully know God. Ideally, we need to be alone in an uninhabited, uncultivated place free of the noisy sounds of organized life, empty of even the voices we love. It might be a desert, a forest, a mountainside; wherever living things can grow unchecked by walls and one can contemplate God in untroubled peace.

It is hard, of course, to pack up and leave for the wilderness. Even those of us who would love an extended stay in the desert feel we cannot abandon our jobs and relationships. Perhaps Underhill spoke of a wilderness "equivalent," because she recognized that, on the whole, modern men and women cannot imitate the Desert Fathers and Mothers of 4th century Egypt and Palestine, who left everyone and everything to meditate for as much as forty years in a cave or hut. Today we are so busy that days of recollection or prayer weekends substitute for the thirty-day retreats popular in the past. Whereas men and women in search of God used to flee from society as though it were on fire, we are more apt today to stay in our jostling cities and hope to find God in the midst of the crowd.

The "wilderness vocation" has not died out, however. It is a basic idea in the monastic theology of both the East and the West, and an experience in every religion. There are Zen and Tibetan Buddhists, Muslims, Indian Yogis, Christians, and Jews who choose—even today—to leave civilization behind for the sake of purification, enlightenment, or quiet communion with God. There are Sioux Indians who still remember their prayerful ordeal in a "vision pit" dug into a hilltop in Canada, Montana, or Minnesota. There a boy of sixteen would spend four days and nights alone under the open sky, without food or water, to await divine revelation. When the medicine man finally came for him at the end of his "wilderness experience," he would have had his vision and was no longer a boy, but a man.

In mid-century Kentucky, Thomas Merton withdrew from his active

Trappist monastery to a hermitage to confront unqualified solitude and direct dependence on God alone. From there he wrote that in the wilderness, one is "left alone with God, to fight out the question of who one really is, to get rid of the impersonation," and meet God face to face. He later added that in the Kentucky woods he felt closer to the Zen monks of ancient Japan than to the "busy, impatient men of the modern world."

A contemporary order of French Protestant monks called "*Les Petits Frères de Jésus*" requires that each new member begin his religious career by spending a year alone in a small shelter in the Sahara desert. Food and water are dropped off for him from time to time, but he has no TV or radio in this "testing ground," no newspaper, playing cards, or letters, to distract him from his prolonged encounter with God: a bible is all he owns.

The articles in this edition of "Fellowship In Prayer" describe less radical encounters with God in the wilderness. Shimon Anisfeld met God by surprise in a secular environment unreceptive to his Orthodox Jewish faith. Sandy Huffaker went to Haiti and found God among the poorest people of the world, while Avis Crowe had a spiritual awakening at home in South Africa. Kathryn North gained inspiration from May Sarton, whose creativity "cleared a space" into which God could flow, and an anonymous author talks about Sikhs' and Quakers' mutual knowledge of God as Light. Sheila Parks writes about being transformed by the literal wilderness of imprisonment. The issue closes with Mary Alice Reid's drawings and poetry, born of spiritual aloneness and giftedness.

Desert or paradise, the wilderness is a region to which we all must go, since there in the silence the spirit grows: A secluded spot outdoors and far away from home, or simply the place in your heart where you find God.

MFG

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From the Wilderness

Speaking and teaching belong to the master: the disciple's part is to be silent and to listen.

Abbot Pastor said: Any trial whatever that comes to you can be conquered by silence.

Daiju visited the master Baso in China. Baso asked: "What do you seek?"

"Enlightenment," replied Daiju.

"You have your own treasure house. Why do you search outside?" Baso asked.

Daiju inquired: "Where is my treasure house?"

Baso answered: "What you are asking *is* your treasure house."

Daiju was enlightened! Ever after he urged his friends: "Open your own treasure house and use those treasures."

It was said of Abbot Agatho that for three years he carried a stone in his mouth until he learned to be silent.

Macarius said: This is the truth, if a monk regards contempt as praise, poverty as riches, and hunger as a feast, he will never die.

The elder said to him: As yet you have not found a ship, and you have not put your baggage aboard, and you have not started to cross the sea: can you talk as if you had already arrived in that city to which you planned to go? When you have put into practice the thing you are talking about, then speak from knowledge of the thing itself!

One of the brethren had sinned, and the priest told him to leave the community. So then Abbot Besarion got up and walked out with him, saying: I too am a sinner!

One of the monks, called Serapion, sold his book of the gospels and gave the money to those who were hungry, saying: I have sold the book which told me to sell all that I had and give to the poor.

Abbot Hor said to his disciple: Take care that you never bring into this cell the words of another.

We ought to be like a dead person with our companions, for to die to our friends is to cease to judge them in anything.

What my Faith and Practice Mean to me

SHIMON TOBIAS ANISFELD

This past fall Fellowship In Prayer inaugurated an annual awards program named for the Fellowship's Co-founder, Kathryn G. Brown. Princeton University students were invited to submit essays on the topic, "What my Religious Faith and Practice Mean to me," and two students tied for first place. Their equally outstanding essays will be published in alphabetical order according to their last names, Shimon Anisfeld's in this edition of "F.I.P.," Christopher Zimmer's in our August issue.

Presenting the awards, Fellowship In Prayer President Paul Walsh said that "Shimon Anisfeld and Christopher Zimmer's concern with the life of the spirit, their willingness to devote time and energy to the difficult problems of faith and practice, and their evident commitment to making their beliefs an active part of their lives, are deeply encouraging at a time when deceit, corruption, and greed command so many of the headlines. These essays have set a very high standard that next year's contestants will be hard pressed to equal."

The awards program was begun at Princeton because of the University's proximity to our headquarters, but it will be extended next fall to other colleges and universities in the United States.

I grew up as an Orthodox Jew, and my religious life has been a struggle to relate to that background. This is an account of that struggle, of my religious development as I searched for a coherent understanding of my Judaism and my spirituality, of God and Orthodox ritual. Due to the limitations of space, this article must be but an overview of that development, ignoring some issues and simplifying others.

I grew up within the framework of a traditional home, school, and community. But by the time I reached the middle of high school, I found myself seriously questioning both the correctness of the beliefs of Orthodoxy and the spiritual meaningfulness of its system of ritual practice. First, I found that the reasoning necessary to intellectually justify Orthodoxy required too much of a leap of faith. I found that I really did not believe in God as the omnipotent Creator who wants us to live our lives

Shimon Anisfeld, a senior from Englewood, New Jersey, will graduate this month with a degree in chemistry. He plans to spend a year in Israel before going on to graduate school in chemistry and hopes to eventually become a professor at an Israeli University. He has unofficially entitled his essay, "The Ritual and the Spiritual: One Jew's Struggle."

in a certain way. Similarly, I found it hard to believe in the revelation at Sinai, in the authority of the Oral Law, or in the validity of the whole process which over millennia took the Bible and fashioned it into something infinitely more complex and detailed—the Halakhic system which governs modern Orthodoxy.

Second—and obviously related—I found that much of religious practice no longer had power for me. I found the minutiae of observance stifling and constricting, both personally and spiritually. I could skip the evening service and not feel any loss in my life; I could eat without a blessing and feel only freedom, not sin. Many observances had no spiritual meaning for me, and I tried to avoid doing them merely out of a sense of obligation or guilt.

Yet throughout high school I never moved to detach myself from Orthodoxy. My religious practice declined a bit—eating without blessings, for example—but I still participated in the Orthodox community; I still saw myself as an Orthodox Jew. Why? For one thing, my doubts were just that—doubts, not any sense of certainty that God didn't exist or that Orthodoxy was wrong. I was content to live with these doubts, to discuss them and try to resolve them within the bounds of Orthodoxy.

There were also two psychological or emotional benefits which I derived from Orthodoxy and which helped "keep me in"; however, we'll see that I interpreted both of these in a negative way. The first was that alongside the rituals that had become meaningless for me, there were still many rituals which retained their religious power; there were still many occasions on which I "got into it"—experienced the spiritual and emotional high which comes along with religious rituals and symbols. Thus, for example, the power of the Day of Atonement or of the other holidays was still real for me; I still momentarily experienced God, confessed my sins, and was carried upward in religious ecstasy. Sometimes even a regular Sabbath service or the daily act of putting on phylacteries would attain tremendous meaning and numinous power.

However, I interpreted these experiences as weaknesses in myself; in a sense I even felt remotely guilty or mildly ashamed for having these experiences. For I saw them as manifestations not of God or of my spirituality, but of the emotional power of ingrained symbols; how could I not respond to the psychological effect of a Day of Atonement when my whole being was infused from earliest youth with a deep emotional consciousness of the holiness of the day? In general, how could I resist being

caught up in symbolism and ritual which has such incredible dramatic and emotional power and which fulfills such pressing psychological needs, such as the need for a fatherly God providing security from evil, or the need for a world-view which sees order, not chaos, or the need to use one's body in the service of a higher force of good? How could I resist the force of this ritual system, even though I had doubts about the truth of its theological/intellectual foundation? Even in the midst of my emotion-laden Day of Atonement, I remember thinking: maybe this "high" is from fasting, from the psychological desire for confession and atonement, from my internal association of this day with powerful childhood memories—and not from the divine correctness of Orthodox practice and belief. Thus, I saw the ritual as probably incorrect but psychologically powerful and myself as weak for not resisting it.

A second, related effect was the comfort I felt in the familiarity of this way of life. The reader must understand that the Halakhic system which governs Orthodoxy is truly an all-encompassing framework for understanding and living in the world. Thus, it governs one's every action, from the prayer upon arising from sleep, through the blessing before letting any morsel enter the mouth, to the way one orients one's bed. It also determines the categories with which one understands people and objects; these Halakhic categories are pervasive, well-defined and all-inclusive, and carry manifold implications for one's relationship to people and objects. I had grown up within this well-determined system and thus my most natural pattern of thought was to a large extent Halakhic; it was difficult to refrain from thinking in Halakhic categories, and hard to avoid Jewish issues and Jewish memories. In addition, I naturally felt secure in the complexity of the ritual; it was a comfortable, familiar home to which I could return when I felt threatened and alone. For instance, I remember being at a youth group weekend where I felt socially uncomfortable and ill at ease. I reacted by retreating into the familiarity of the prayer service and taking great joy in this one aspect of the weekend which I was used to and comfortable with. That particular service then became suddenly much more valuable and meaningful to me than services usually were.

Of course, I interpreted both my Halakhic way of thought and my retreat to the comfort of ritual as weaknesses. I saw them as shackles of my upbringing. I saw myself as a hypocrite for succumbing to this "lower" psychological need for a comfortable home by accepting this untrue system, and I vowed that I would not live like this all my life—that I would

eventually decide about my doubts one way or the other and follow the true course of action, regardless of whether or not it was the easiest, the most familiar.

After this religious transition of my high school years, I moved to the setting which was to mean both religious trauma and a new kind of religious understanding—Princeton University. Here for the first time I was flung into a non-Jewish environment—an environment which did not even understand me enough to reject me. Instead, my tradition—the way of life and thought which were all that I had known—were so far from the consciousness of the environment, of its traditions, and of most students, that it was ignored. I had entered an alien world which I did not understand but had to deal with, and which did not understand me but could ignore me.

I must pause here to point out that my commitment to Judaism—if not my commitment to religion—has always been unwavering. Judaism as a culture and a nation has always had emotional and spiritual power for me. My most emotional experiences throughout life have been based on my tie to the tragic, glorious history of my people. My heart cries for my brethren in the concentration camps and ghettoes, rejoices at the return of my people Israel to my land Israel, weeps for the martyrs of the Crusades, exults in the beauty of the medieval poetry of Spanish Jewry. I have never questioned the psychological needs behind this identification with Judaism—probably because cultural or national Judaism largely lacks both the potentially questionable theological foundation and the potentially meaningless ritual which are prominent features of religious Judaism. In any case, even after my religious doubts of high school, I was still strongly Jewish.

Thus, when I was thrust into the alien world of Princeton and I felt my Jewishness threatened, my reaction was a strengthening of my feelings for Judaism. I learned to live with my fellow students, but I exulted in my differences. I felt a need to identify more strongly than ever with my threatened heritage. In some sense, I still feel most Jewish around Christmastime, when my identity is besieged and I rise up against the carols, creches, and Christmas lights around me and declare: I am a Jew! My heritage is as deep and as rich as yours! It has its own beauty, its own value! I must live my heritage, not yours—because I AM A JEW!

Given that I felt this need to remain Jewish in opposition to my environment, how could I express it? The only Judaism I knew, and the one that seemed to present the strongest way of identifying, was religion.

Sure, I could be a Zionist, but how would that set me apart in daily life from Christianity and from secular non-Judaism? I needed something that would make me Jewish—and conspicuously and painfully Jewish—in my everyday living. Also, I needed something that would encompass the totality of my heritage. I began to realize that a large part of my cultural or national identification with Judaism really had to be based on religion. How can I identify with the heritage of Judaism and ignore its main component? Even if I disbelieve in the divine truth of the Torah, how can I not appreciate its role as the shaper of my nation and rejoice in it for that reason? Even if I don't believe that there is a God who wants us to celebrate holidays, how can I be Jewish and not accept the Jewish way of dividing up time? And if I do recognize the holidays, how is my celebration Jewish if it is not based in some way on the original source of Jewish holidays (the Torah) and on the manner of celebration by my nation through the centuries? Thus, some sort of relationship with traditional religious Judaism was what I needed to express my beleaguered Jewishness.

I found the solution in an involvement with the Orthodox Jewish group on campus, Yavneh. My most special feelings at Princeton have been those associated with Yavneh. I glory in the existence of a vibrant Jewish life in the face of a tradition of anti-Semitism and a day-to-day environment of secular Christianity. My finest memories of Princeton are those of dancing through campus with the Torah on Simhat Torah, to the stares of puzzled students. Hooray, I have brought my beautiful, rich heritage to Princeton!

Let me pause here to clarify my feelings towards Princeton. I love Princeton. The University's commitment to diversity, openness and Jewish life has allowed me to grow personally, spiritually, and Jewishly. I love Princeton's traditions, from the alma mater to arch-sings. Yet mixed in with this love is resentment—both a sadness at the anti-Semitic history of the University and a defensive reaction against a present-day environment which tries to be as open to Jews as possible but which, like American society at large, is threatening to me and to my heritage.

Thus, my religious commitment began to have meaning for me as the way of expressing my heritage: I am a Jew, heir to a long religious and cultural tradition, and I cannot abandon that tradition.

All was not settled, though. First, I was still troubled by the question of the two psychological benefits discussed above, which I still felt accounted for much of the pleasure I derived from Orthodoxy. In addition,

I began to wonder: am I defining myself solely in opposition to others? Also, is this not just another way of subjugating THE TRUTH to psychological comforts and needs—this time the need to identify with my Jewish heritage? How can I use this theologically unsound system to express my Jewishness? What value does Jewish religion have for my Jewish identity and for the truth which I am seeking if its foundations are not true, if God does not exist? For by now I was more sure than ever that my intellectual doubts of high school were correct.

There are two important developments of the last year or so that serve to answer these questions and to bring me to where I am now. The first of these is the sense that there is no such thing as THE TRUTH, and that even if there were, it would not be the best way to live in the world. Every culture needs a way of dealing with the issues raised by life in this complex, inscrutable world. Every culture needs seasons of joy and of sadness, a sense of the cycle of life-dormancy-rebirth, a way of dealing with death, a structure for a community, a framework for observance of important passage points in life, a practical way of organizing existence, and so on. The value of religious Judaism is that it has, over the centuries, evolved a system of symbols and a way of life to meet these needs. The fact that the intellectual reference frame for this way of life may not be divine truth is unimportant: in some sense "divine truth" is really whatever enables me to comprehend the world and live a satisfied, meaningful life. Of course, problems emerge when some of the values behind the Orthodox comprehension of the world conflict with values I've absorbed from Western culture. I have worked out partial solutions to this problem, but that discussion would take us too far afield. The point here is that the all-encompassing, ritualized nature of Orthodoxy provides me with a ready-made way of life and symbolic structure with which to face the world.

Included in this new understanding is the realization that the psychological needs which I interpreted in high school as weaknesses are an integral part of every human psyche. They are needs that must be met if we are to live comfortably in the world, and meeting these needs, not searching for "truth," should be my criterion for a valid "religious" system. Because of my background, Orthodox ritual and symbolism has the ability to give me a framework which I feel comfortable with and which satisfies my natural needs for a father figure, for atonement, and for a way of dealing with death, and so on. It is Orthodoxy that can best supply me with a community, with a way to organize and make sense of my life, with rit-

ualized ceremonies and prayers that can comfort me by their familiarity. This should be enough to make Orthodoxy worthwhile and valid for me.

The second development is that of an immediate sense of spirituality and of God in my life. I realized that I had been too hasty in dismissing God, that there are certain things in life that are beautiful and mysterious, that give a sense of Something Beyond. I still don't believe in God as Omnipotent, as a creator, or as a supreme being with a will for mankind (THE TRUTH). Instead, I use God to refer to that sense of deep beauty and incomprehensibility which has led to all religion and all philosophy. In other words, when we love, when we are overwhelmed by the beauty of nature, when we sit and gather in our own inner forces, when we are carried away with a sense of ecstasy and mystery, when we raise our souls and our voices in song, we are experiencing God. God is the totality of existence; He is the life force that makes living in the world so special; She is the power of each of us, and of all of us together. God is more than any individual, but He is not necessarily more than the sum of all of mankind and all of nature. That I exist, that I have feelings—this is God. I've learned to experience the Divinity through quiet moments of introspection, through the sense of well-being I get from athletic activity, through singing quietly as I walk through the dark.

In a way, this description is too broad to mean anything, or to be argued with. But that is exactly the point—I define God as something that everyone feels, though in different ways. All the different religions are just different ways of trying to understand and explain the basic feeling of God which I've described. Even atheists have some system for understanding the wonder of the world—and that system is their explanation of God, their religion. A person who attributes the whole world to scientific processes has science as his God; a person who throws up her hands and cannot explain the wonder must still acknowledge its presence—and that is recognition of God. The only person who truly doesn't believe in God is someone who never experiences specialness, wonder, beauty, or love.

What is my way of experiencing this kind of spirituality? There are several non-Jewish activities through which I can experience God, such as music and athletic activity. However, my most powerful personal emotional storehouse is Judaism—both cultural and religious—and thus I turn to it for expression of this new-found understanding of God. First, my tie to my people and to my cultural heritage is an indispensable part

of my spirituality. It is through my strong identification with Judaism that I am led to highly emotional experiences, which I now interpret as encounters with the Spirit, or with God. Second, the religious system of ritual and symbol is, for me, a deep reservoir of spiritualism. The fact that the Day of Atonement is filled with childhood memories and associations and with rich emotional symbolism makes it a good way for me to find spirituality. In high school I interpreted my emotional response to symbols and rituals as a weakness; now I interpret it as a manifestation of my spirituality and of God's presence.

To sum up these two important developments of the last year: Religious Judaism provides for me a way of life and a coherent world-view which meets my need for an organized community and which answers the psychological necessities raised by life in the world. Religious Judaism also provides me with something that points beyond merely a comfortable life (though that is a good in itself) and leads me to experience a fully spiritual life. Because of the system of ritual and symbol, religious Judaism provides me with a way of expressing the spirituality that I have inside.

These ways of thinking have allowed me to find greater meaning in many rituals and in the system as a whole. Still unresolved in my mind are such issues as: What is to take precedence—my own spirituality or the Orthodox system? If there are some rituals which still are meaningless to me, should I practice them? If not, then of what value is it to pick and choose from a system which is meant to be taken as a whole? Also, how can I take a religion which views God as omnipotent creator with a will for the world and interpret it for my own radically different view of God?

Though these issues are still unresolved, I am confident that I am on my way to a life which is enriched psychologically and spiritually by a day-to-day, living relationship with Jewish religious tradition.

An Interview with Sandy Huffaker

In the breathtaking Broadway production of Victor Hugo's book about the poor, Les Misérables, *the presence of holiness is so strong that one actor said, "This show is all about God." One gains the same impression from Sandy Huffaker's diary. The Haiti that he records is filled with the Spirit of God who gives hope, consoles and sometimes rescues "les misérables" of the earth.*

FIP: Some of our readers have written to us that they would like to know something about the man behind the cartoonist, particularly about his spiritual life, which shines so brightly through these cartoons. Would you tell us a little about the various chapters in your spiritual story.

SH: My family was very religious. I went to church from day one on, reading the Bible right along and praying about it, and I had my life built around Christ, although I didn't like to go to church—that was just my personality. My great grandfather was a Baptist minister and a conscientious objector. He helped the wounded on both sides during the Civil War and ended up getting a "Yankee" pension, which was the neighborhood scandal when my father lived with him as a boy. The Civil Rights Movement was the strongest experience I've had. I went to the University of Alabama in the 60s when Wallace was standing in the door. My wife and I were marching, holding hands with the blacks and people were throwing things at us. My wife was run off the road one night by the Ku Klux Klan and almost killed. We should have been afraid, but we weren't. There was a wall of protection around us, the Holy Spirit, I believe. But then everyone, my family, and all the churches I knew of, were on George Wallace's side, and I thought, the bible doesn't say "love your neighbor unless he's black." I felt led into the Civil Rights Movement and right out of the Church, thinking Christians were racist. For the next couple of years my faith was really shaky. My family's fundamentalism was really offensive to me. Then the Vietnam War came along and I was against the War and more than ever at odds with my family and the Southern Christian establishment.

FIP: So Chapter I in your spiritual journey was life at home with fun-

Sandy Huffaker has a national reputation as a political cartoonist and was twice nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Among the books that he has written or illustrated are The Dispensable Man *and* The Bald Book. *Although Sandy has been called "one of the heavies in cartooning in America," he has recently made a mid-career switch from cartooning to painting.*

damentalist Presbyterian religion, and Chapter II was losing the family faith during the civil rights movement. What happened next?

SH: I started drinking heavily, and it increased after my divorce when I moved to New York City and, basically, lost my reason to be. I had a lot of success in my work, but there was no meaning in it, no purpose. Someone took me one day to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, and I found out about the twelve spiritual principles. I saw them as thinly disguised Christianity and didn't want any part of that, but I saw people helping each other and I liked that. Something "real" was in those rooms. They called God the "Higher Power," which I could stomach, so I kept going back. Eventually that brought me back to the bible and to spiritual writers that made a strong impression on me. I was crawling back toward faith. I was beginning to see what real religion was all about. The Africa trip came from the realization that if I was to start taking my faith seriously, I would have to start associating with people who took their faith seriously. Mother Teresa came to mind, because she is living a Christlike life, but the church still seemed Republican, well-to-do, unsympathetic to the poor, totally unrelated to Christ.

FIP: So you decided to try to live a Christian life without rejoining a denomination?

SH: Yes, but I knew that I had to try to forgive, despite it all. Finally, I found a little Quaker Church. This one was right for me.

FIP: And now you're a practicing Quaker? What have you found there that you didn't find elsewhere?

SH: The idea of the "Christ within." Everyone has Christ within and you can see it if you look. Religion is not a set of beliefs for me; it's inside, not outside. It's a question of the Holy Spirit, not of dogma or rules. We have to stop and be silent and listen for the Spirit in a free way, in our hearts.

FIP: You are reminding me of the page in your Haiti Journal, "The Spirit Comes." You seem to believe that when people gather together to wait for God, God comes. Is it the group's openness or the nature of their communication that makes the difference?

SH: I think it's the openness. At the beginning of the Haiti experience, everybody was feeling the same way, like "what are we doing here?" It was a faith move, we came on faith. Suddenly we saw that we couldn't do it under our own power, and we all started opening up about our fears and why we came. There was so much love, then a feeling that we weren't alone and that we would be taken care of. We all started feeling uplifted and joyous and hopeful. That wasn't our own power.

FIP: Now that you've given us the outline of your spiritual story, I'd be

interested in knowing if there were spiritual friendships that gave you support along the way.

SH: Don McClanen, from the Ministry of Money. An excessively fundamentalist, rigid type recommended me to Don. Don was afraid that *I* was like the fundamentalist, and I was afraid that *Don* was. But we were like soul brothers, we talked and talked, and hugged each other. I knew he was the real thing. Also Georgia Shoberg, an Episcopalian priest, is a great support to me, feeding me books she thinks I'll like.

FIP: What did you learn from these people?

SH: Don had spiritual values, concern for the poor, concern about peace, wasn't into establishment Christianity. He's a Christlike person. Also, he was open about his own faults and pain. I didn't feel any pietism or spiritual pride in him.

FIP: How much do you feel you owe your parents, despite the distance between your spirituality and theirs?

SH: In the last year or two, we have recovered a lot of our love for each other, because of my opening up and telling them about my feelings. They don't understand my involvement in politics, and see me as something of a black sheep, because I didn't go into business like the rest of the family. But that's alright, because there's a lot of love in the family now.

FIP: Would you tell us which writers have had an influence on your spiritual journey, and what you learned from them.

SH: Thomas Merton, Henry Nouwen, *An Interrupted Life* by Letty Hillesum. I learned that the journey inward can be very painful, as God purifies you of your attachments. We have to be emptied, so God can fill that. Pain kills our illusions so truth can bring us joy. Also, that at times when we feel emptied and pure, we don't necessarily find God. We must wait on the Lord. We must see that it is not by our own efforts that we find God: God finds us.

FIP: What did you get out of *An Interrupted Life*?

SH: As her suffering became worse during the Holocaust, her spirits rose instead of falling.

FIP: Have you had an experience like that, a major loss or threat or crisis that the Spirit helped you to endure?

SH: Yes. The ending of a deep relationship will send you back to God real quickly. All of the dentists in Haiti were divorced and trying to serve God by caring for the poor.

FIP: In your Diaries, you often use a word that goes against the grain of our narcissistic society, the word "community." Would you tell us why that is an important concept to you.

SH: Mother Teresa told us that the sisters could not do their kind of

work without each other. When you experience so much sorrow, you need other people to hold you up, and you hold them up, and you have each other to talk to. But I'm still struggling with community, because I'm basically a lone wolf artist type. It is something I have to work on. As a cartoonist, I saw myself as a guy on the outside telling the truth, even though I knew I would take a beating for it.

FIP: I understand that you are giving up your career as a cartoonist and find that curious, since you are so successful. I was reflecting on what your reasons might be and remembered a line from Rainer Maria Rilke: "One's reputation is the sum of the public's misunderstandings of him or her." Do you relate to that?

SH: I like it. I'm still going to do what I've been doing, but as an artist. I will be choosing the subject matter and will be able to say what I want to say. As a cartoonist, I had to illustrate other people's ideas, and still took a beating for it. Painting means total freedom to me. I can get up in the morning and have joy in my work. I'm scared that I won't make a living at it, but I've cut my expenses a lot by simplifying my life.

FIP: When did you start drawing?

SH: As a tiny child. I just picked up a pencil and started drawing little stick figures killing each other. Today I draw little stick figures loving each other.

FIP: I have heard you described as "Christ-centered."

SH: I am a little better than I used to be. That's all. Ellie Weisel said that it would be awful to have a world *without* a God, but it's pretty awful *with* one. You have to grow. Faith demands that you change, and change takes hard work and pain, not what these TV evangelists say. They just paint the flowers.

FIP: I would like to ask you a few questions about your trips to the third world. You were in Haiti for nine days. What does the word "Haiti" connote to you now?

SH: Pain. The worst poverty in the Western hemisphere, so near us, and we do nothing about it. We offer them weapons instead of food. There isn't any Communist threat in Haiti, and there never would be one if we spent our money on the people instead of for keeping these military types in power.

FIP: But our government insists that there is a Communist threat in Haiti.

SH: That's the only way for the Haitian government to get money out of us. They aren't willing to say they're starving and they're poor and they need food.

FIP: Tell us a little bit about the poverty you saw there.

SH: I think it's worse than what I saw in India. People say that Calcutta has the worst poverty in the world, but I think Haiti is poorer than Calcutta. We went to The Destitute and Dying Home and were walking around greeting people, when we passed a bed where a woman was lying with flies all over her face. I began to try to fan the flies away, and somebody came over to me and said, "she's dead." Nobody around her, not even in the two other beds near her, had noticed.

FIP: How did that experience affect you?

SH: Just great sadness.

FIP: What do you think is the solution for Haiti?

SH: In the short run, lots of aid. In the long run, it has to do with the government. But nothing works there. There are 200 people running for President. They can't form coalitions, because there were three hundred years of slavery when they weren't even allowed to marry, so there's no community. There's not enough to eat. So I don't know. These little saints down there working for the people are the great hope. New programs like the Peace Corps should be set up, so Americans can help Third World people to help themselves in a spirit of love.

FIP: Is the government doing any more for the people than Duvalier and his son did?

SH: Not much. The man in power now supposedly has the usual Rolls Royces and the Swiss bank accounts, and there's incredible corruption. They had a meeting to write another Constitution—their fortieth—but nobody from the government showed up. Hardly anyone showed up.

FIP: I hope that in this era of liberation theology the church is helping the poor.

SH: Roger Desir was calling on the church to repent for having been tied in with the Duvaliers and with the monied mulatto establishment. In other places in the world, the church seems to be with the poor, particularly the Catholic Church in the Philippines and Nicaragua, but not in Haiti.

FIP: You made a distinction in your diary between spiritual and material poverty. You have been talking about the extreme material poverty; please tell us something about the spiritual situation.

SH: There's a lot of spiritual growth going on there. Churches are everywhere. Where you have nothing but God, that's where you see really strong spirituality. Our spirituality gets watered down here, because we think we don't need God and faith slides away until hard times hit.

FIP: In regard to the spirituality of the people of Africa and Haiti, could you tell us about a personal experience.

SH: There were lots of them, especially with the "little" people who dedicate their lives to helping the poor. Richard, the head dentist is spending his own money to be there. The other two dentists were just about to run out of money, but my brother, who is with a foundation, got 5,000 dollars for them to keep them going for a little while. A very little money goes a long way, a hundred dollars builds four concrete floors which instantly will save lives.

FIP: Why is that?

SH: They have open sewers, and when they overflow, the people get diseases, so a concrete floor gets them out of the mud and keeps them from getting so sick. Even nailing up cheap baskets to hold babies can keep babies from the mud and save lives.

Another experience that hit me hard was when Richard broke down. He's such a saint, yet was blaming himself because he had been turning away a nasty woman who he thought was faking her problem. It turned out that her child was sick and she was dying. He was being much too hard on himself, but these saints are very humble, as though there is just no more ego there, and the more Christlike they become, the harder they are on themselves. Mother Teresa is like that, too. She is so tough on the sisters that they call her "the tyrant."

FIP: Do you have any more journeys planned?

SH: I think these trips might be my calling. I'd like to go to Nicaragua, maybe Cuba, maybe South Africa, just to help spread the word, like a journalist, to tell the story. I'm trying to get out of the way and wait for a leading of the Spirit. I'll see what happens. If I go, I'll just write down what I see. These sketch journals feel like the most meaningful thing I've done in twenty years.

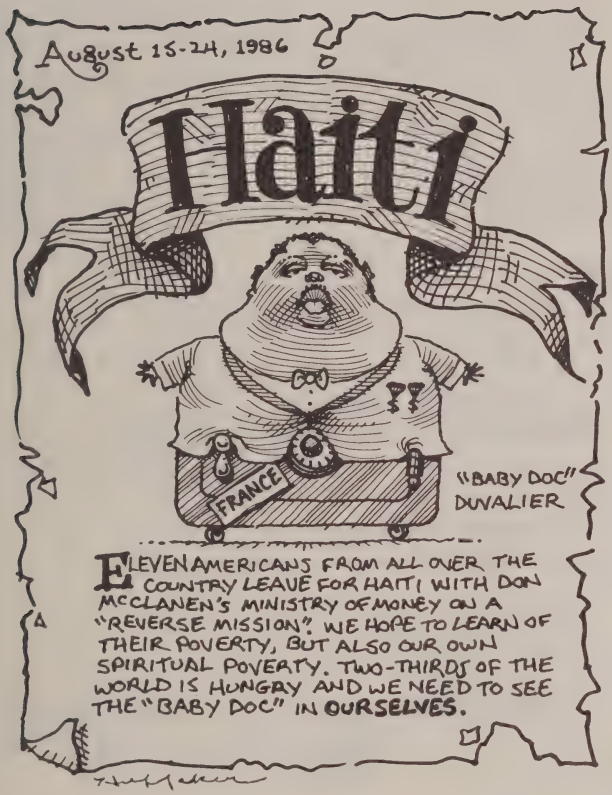
FIP: Has your relationship with God changed in this current chapter of your life because of these trips?

SH: I think my faith is stronger and deeper and very real now, not shaky, and that gives me meaning and a reason to be.

FIP: Is there any safe way for people to contribute money that will reach the Haitians and not be diverted or stolen?

SH: Yes, money would reach the dentists if it were sent to "Project Soleil" at:

People to People 414 Summet Avenue St. Louis, MO 63119


August 15-24, 1986
Haiti
FRANCE
"BABY DOC" DUVALIER
ELEVEN AMERICANS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY LEAVE FOR HAITI WITH DON McCLANEN'S MINISTRY OF MONEY ON A "REVERSE MISSION". WE HOPE TO LEARN OF THEIR POVERTY, BUT ALSO OUR OWN SPIRITUAL POVERTY. TWO-THIRDS OF THE WORLD IS HUNGRY AND WE NEED TO SEE THE "BABY DOC" IN OURSELVES.

KEEP THE FAITH, BABY
NO BAGS
NO INSPIRATION
NO WATER IN THE POOL

THE SPIRIT COMES

FEELING DULL, LISTLESS AND ANXIOUS ALL DAY. EVERYONE ELSE SEEMED THE SAME WAY — WONDERING WHY WE WERE HERE, SUSPICIOUS OF EACH OTHER, AND BASICALLY READY TO GO HOME. THEN IT HAPPENED. IN OUR FIRST GROUP SHARING, EVERYONE TOLD A BIT ABOUT THEMSELVES AND WHY THEY THOUGHT TO PUT THEMSELVES IN THIS STRANGE PLACE. THE OPENING UP WAS INCREDIBLE AND SO MOVING THAT IT ALMOST FELT LIKE IT CAUSED THE POWERFUL THUNDERSTORM OUTSIDE OUR AWNING. THE WORDS "SPIRIT", "COMFORTER", "HOLY SPIRIT" HIT AGAIN AND AGAIN. WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR NOW — WE HAVE OUTSIDE HELP.

THE DENTISTS

STRAIGHT OUT OF FICTION, ARE THREE OF THE MOST AMAZING PEOPLE I HAVE EVER MET. WHEN THEY ARE NOT BACK IN THE STATES RECOVERING FROM SOME SERIOUS DISEASE (SYPHILLIS, ABCESSES, HEMORRHAGING, ETC.) THEY LIVE AND WORK IN THE WORST SLUMS I HAVE EVER SEEN ("BOSTON" AND "BROOKLYN"). RICHARD IS A 60 YEAR OLD DENTIST WHO TAUGHT BOBBY (FORMER ACCOUNTANT) AND ELAINE (FORMER SECRETARY) HOW TO PULL TEETH AND THEY ROAM HAITI WITH KNAPSACKS DISPENSING FREE DENTAL CARE — NOT TO MENTION LAYING CONCRETE FLOORS, MEDICAL HELP, HANGING HAMMOCKS TO KEEP SICK KIDS OUT OF THE MUD, ETC. PROBABLY THREE OF THE HAPPIEST, MOST JOYFUL PEOPLE I'VE EVER MET!

ETC. ETC. ETC.

THE DENTAL OFFICE

THE FIRST THREE PATIENTS

"THE KID" PULLS HER FIRST TOOTH!

ROBYN, FROM OUR GROUP, AT 16 YEARS OLD WITH ½ HOUR OF DENTAL TRAINING, YANKS HER FIRST MOLAR!

DR. RICHARD'S DENTAL OFFICE AND HOME IN THE MIDDLE OF "BOSTON" SLUM. PEOPLE FROM NEARBY SLUMS THROW ROCKS HERE BECAUSE THERE IS NO DENTIST IN THEIR TERRITORY. TODAY THE DENTISTS ARE DOCTORS, WASHING WOUNDS, DISPENSING MEDICINE, FEEDING MALNOURISHED KIDS, ETC. WHEN WALKING HERE, THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE OFFICE, THE CROWDS GROW FRIENDLIER AND FRIENDLIER, UNTIL THERE IS ALMOST A CELEBRATION WHEN WE GET THERE.

A FINE 'HOWDY'

WEDNESDAY WE DRIVE THROUGH AWESOME MOUNTAINS, PAST ONE OF DUVALIER'S MANY RANSACKED FORMER HOMES TO FORT JACQUES WITH THE DENTISTS. THEY PULL 60 TEETH WITH ALL OF US NEEDED TO ASSIST OR PULL. GREAT HOPE HERE - THE PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER AND IN BETTER CONDITION THAN IN PORT-AU-PRINCE WHY MORE CITY PEOPLE DON'T MOVE TO THE COUNTRY IS A MYSTERY. THIS MISSION IS HIGHLY EVANGELICAL, COUNTING ON CHRISTIANITY TO CHANGE "THE WHOLE MAN" AND NOT JUST AID AN ETERNAL PARADE OF THE POOR. THEY SEEM HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL — MUCH JOY, LITERACY, FAITH AND HUMOR.

A MORNING IN ELAINE'S
NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYING
DOCTOR

IN THE AFTERNOON, WE GO TO ROGER DÉSIR'S BEACH HOUSE. AGAIN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SPECTACULAR BEAUTY HERE AND THE GRINDING POVERTY. CREOLE FOOD, SINGING, DANCING, DRINKING AND THE CELEBRATION OF LIFE BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT CULTURES.

JEAN VANIER, THE SAINTLY FRENCH WRITER, WHO WORKS WITH THE HANDICAPPED IN INDIA HAS BUILT A CRAFT CENTER HERE FOR THEM. IT'S IN THE MIDST OF A LARGE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT INITIATED BY ANOTHER SAINT, SALESIAN PRIEST LAWRENCE BOHNER. LOVINGLY CALLED "FATHER BEANS"; HE FEEDS 18,000 CHILDREN A DAY WITH GREAT EMPHASIS ON BEANS FOR PROTEIN AND VITAMINS. "FERDIE" MAHFOOD FOUNDED FOOD FOR THE POOR IN 1982 AFTER A CONVERSION EXPERIENCE, PROMISING GOD HE WOULD DO IT AND GO TO MASS EVERY DAY IF HE GOT TAX EXEMPT STATUS. GOD GAVE HIS SIGN AND FERDIE OBEYED, PAYING ALL OVERHEAD FROM HIS FAMILY IMPORT/EXPORT FORTUNE, SO THAT THE MONEY GOES STRAIGHT TO THE POOR. $18 MILLION SO FAR, MOST OF IT GOING TO HAITI AND JAMAICA. PEOPLE SAY HE HAS THE SAINTLY CHARISMA OF A MOTHER TERESA!

WE END THE TRIP WITH 12 HOURS OF SILENCE FOLLOWED BY SHARING OF FEELINGS. NONE OF US WILL EVER FORGET THE DENTISTS—THEIR ALMOST TOTAL SELFLESS SERVICE HERE LED US TO OPEN OUR HEARTS AND OUR POCKETBOOKS. BOBBY AND ELAINE, USING THEIR OWN SAVINGS TO SERVE HERE, ARE ALMOST BROKE.

MUCH ANGER IS EXPRESSED OVER REAGAN FOREIGN POLICY! WHILE WE WERE FEELING THE PAIN OF THE PEOPLE, SECRETARY SCHULTZ WAS HERE TO TALK ABOUT MORE MILITARY AID TO FIGHT A NON-EXISTENT COMMUNIST THREAT. HAITI HAS NO ENEMIES AND SEEKS NO NEW TERRITORY, YET THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IN IT'S BLINDNESS CONTINUES NOT TO SEE THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS IN THE THIRD WORLD. ROGER DÉSIR'S DREAM OF NO ARMY (AS IN COSTA RICA) RINGS PURE. DID CHRIST EVER SAY "ARM YOURSELVES AGAINST YOUR ENEMIES?" IF AMERICA CONCENTRATED IT'S EFFORTS ON THE PLIGHT OF THIRD WORLD PEOPLE AND NOT ON MILITARY AID FOR SELFISH DICTATORS WITH SWISS BANK ACCOUNTS WHO CLAIM ANTI-COMMUNISM—THERE WOULD BE NO COMMUNIST THREAT!

JESUS CHRIST IS WHAT IS NEEDED HERE, AND YET YOU HAVE DUVALIERS AND MARCOSES WHO HAVE PRIVATE CHAPELS IN THEIR MANSIONS TO PRAY IN. THE CHURCH IS IN THE HANDS OF THE "HAVES" HERE, WHEREAS CHRIST TAUGHT OF THE "HAVE-NOTS"—THE MEEK AND THE LOWLY. MEN LIKE ROGER DÉSIR ARE NEEDED TO CALL ON THE CHURCH TO REPENT. THEY ARE AWARE THAT THEY MAY PAY WITH THEIR LIVES, AS CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED BY THE PHARISEES 2,000 YEARS AGO!

Open House/Closed Heart

AVIS CROWE

Most of us will identify with this author as she confesses a moment of irritation and pride. But as her story comes to its charming conclusion, we learn that her honesty and humility are exceptional.

As Quakers, ritual does not figure prominently in our lives. Yet in recent years, I've discovered a need to mark certain "turnings" in my life in very intentional ways, usually with prayer at the center. We recently moved to Cape Town, South Africa. We stayed in the home of friends who were away while we found our way about and looked for our own place. We signed a lease on a small, wonderfully situated townhouse, set about furnishing it, and were in by Christmas. During this period, I was aware of something stirring deep within that I finally recognized as a wish for a house blessing. It seemed important to declare this new space as God's house, and to ask God's blessings and the prayers of our friends that it be a place of hospitality; that God might work through us and this space to touch all those who might spend time here.

I decided to act quickly as the turn of the year was just days away. It was last minute, to be sure, but a round of phone calls indicated that some people would be able to join us on the afternoon of New Year's Eve for a time of sharing and fellowship. I almost let one phone call spoil it all.

It was an African woman whom we had come to know, a community worker in New Crossroads (an area set aside for black people by the insidious Group Areas Act, the linchpin of Apartheid). When I called, Nosizwe wasn't home and I left a message for her to please call me. My husband took her call. Yes, she'd be delighted to come—could she bring her friends? When I heard about it, and that my husband had agreed, I was irritated. This was *my* party. I wanted only friends there, specific people to share this time that *I* had put together. I didn't want strangers around. After an initial outburst, I quietly steamed, carrying my disappointment and annoyance very carefully, letting it erode the initial im-

Avis Crowe writes to us from her home in South Africa that although she was raised as "a Methodist preacher's kid," she only began her spiritual journey in 1979. She worked at Koinonia Partners in Americus, Georgia, and studied at Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania before moving to South Africa, where she currently makes her home.

Paul M. Schrock

pulse and anticipation. I was annoyed at Nosizwe's nerve in asking. (*I* would never do such a thing!) I was annoyed at my husband for agreeing that it was O.K. (Didn't he know I wouldn't want people coming whom I didn't know?) I was annoyed at myself for being annoyed. I felt childish, aware of it, and angry.

I don't know how long I stewed. Perhaps a day or so. But somewhere along the line, grace entered the picture and made me stop short and see the situation more clearly. The whole purpose and intent of this house blessing was to say it wasn't *my* house, but God's, and with God's blessing, an open place of hospitality and caring for all who would come. Here was an opportunity to open wide the door, but instead I had only been willing to open it a crack to let in a chosen few. I could only cringe—and then laugh—at my foolishness, and be tender towards the distance I had yet to travel before my actions and my intentions are one. But with recognition and acknowledgment, I could turn over my inhospitable thoughts to God so they could be transformed, and I could be genuinely thankful to Nosizwe for unwittingly offering me a very different kind of blessing.

On the afternoon of December 31, about 15—strangers and friends—black, white, brown, gathered in our living room and shared prayers, reflections, and hopes. The spirit of God was clearly present, and continues to be as we welcome old and new friends. The episode was an experience of prayer; when the last guest had gone, I had a full, grateful heart.

Creative Solitude: Inspiration from May Sarton

KATHRYN NORTH

Here are reflections that can "help light the way" of anyone seeking a balance between "silence and words, withdrawal and involvement, distance and closeness, solitude and community," which to both Sarton and North constitutes the core of spirituality.

Now in her seventies, May Sarton is a prolific poet, novelist, and journal writer. For over twenty-five years she has lived a life of creative and contributory solitude and reflected upon that life in a series of memoirs and journals. This piece uses some of those reflections to explore the question of the role of solitude both in Sarton's life and in spiritual and creative life more generally.

For Sarton that role is clear: to be valid, solitude must serve a higher purpose. As she says in *Recovering* (pp. 32-34):

> If one does choose solitude it must be for a purpose other than mere self-seeking. . . .
>
> There must be commitment somewhere or life has no meaning. Can one be committed simply to oneself? I think not. From the time I was 30 and had some proof that there was a real talent at work, I committed myself to the art of writing, wanted to serve that art with all that I could give it.

While Sarton does not explicitly discuss her commitment to art in religious terms, it is clear that for her writing is experienced as a vocation in a deeply religious sense—a calling to which one must respond and which one must serve.

Sarton's sense of vocation is so strong indeed that she gets concerned during those rare periods when she relaxes into a sense of contentment. In *House by the Sea*, for example, she says (p. 215):

> My fear is that I am going slack. It is too easy to lie around, enjoying life at its purest and simplest, watching the downy woodpecker at the feeder, looking out to sea, rough and troubled today as a northeaster builds up and

Kathryn North is a writer, psychotherapist, and relationship counselor in Princeton, New Jersey. She describes her work as helping people to get in touch with their deepest inner self understood as "the voice of God within." The author of many articles, she writes especially for those whose experience of Spirit is expressed through creativity.

Tom Dunham

> darkens the sky. I could immerse myself in such things for hours. But if all tension slips away, if one becomes simply a sentient being without the desire even to note down what is happening, in my case the reason for existence has gone too. I can justify this beautiful place and my life here only if, because of it, I am able to give through my work.

With this kind of conscience and dedication, it is no wonder that as Sarton says in *Plant Dreaming Deep* (p. 56):

> . . . solitude became my task,
> No shelter but a grave demand,
> And I must answer, never ask,
> Taking this bridegroom by the hand.

As Sarton soon discovered, one major form this "grave demand" takes is "the battle for time to work, and for the state of mind that makes work possible." (*Plant Dreaming Deep*, p. 59) One of the key threats to this state of mind is what Sarton calls the "clutter" of everyday life. As she says in *Journal of a Solitude* (p. 159):

> In the end what kills is not agony (for agony at least asks something of the soul) but everyday life.

Another is rushing and time pressure. As she says in *House by the Sea* (p. 157):

> . . . the work needs space around it. Hurry and flurry break into the deep still place where I can remember and sort out what I want to say.

That "deep still place" can be found only through entry into a kind of timelessness that is akin to mystic contemplation. Sarton herself is aware of this likeness, quoting with approval a letter written to her by Virginia Russell (*Recovering*, p. 188):

> ". . . Kairos, suspension from time, is, I think, what the artist or the mystic knows during what we call moments of inspiration. . . .
>
> And one who creates or one who prays perhaps moves over into that other realm for 'brief visits' and returns in some way changed. . . ."

She is also aware of the delicate and ever-changing balance upon which both artistic and spiritual creativity depend. She quotes Henri J. M. Nouwen's *Out of Solitude* in *Recovering* (p. 189) and then adds her own thought:

> "The careful balance between silence and words, withdrawal and involvement, distance and closeness, solitude and community forms the basis of

the Christian's life." It is so with the artist's life always and finding the balance is the never-ending struggle.

One of the ways Sarton finds this balance is through deeply contemplative experiences of nature. She describes one such experience in *Recovering* (p. 208):

> One slides down deep deep into contemplation. This is not ecstasy like the light on lavender petals. It is more like prayer. Beauty beyond our understanding and beyond our uniqueness as individuals. Presence that asks nothing of us except to be in its presence. And filled with that presence we walked back into our separate lives.

For the mystic such experiences of communion with the Ultimate may offer the deepest access to the Ground of Being. For Sarton, however, they seem to rest rather than energize her soul, to provide the spacious and restful context for her creativity rather than stimulating it directly.

In her case direct creative stimulation comes instead from intense emotion, either positive or negative. The intense positive emotion usually takes the form of finding "a muse," with whom she falls in love and by whom she is inspired to write poetry. Of one such experience she writes (*At Seventy*, pp. 192-193):

> I am happy because there is someone to focus the world for me again and to hold time still. Everything falls into place; I have even managed to write a lot of letters since I got back nine days ago, as though floated, instead of struggling against intolerable pressures. How mysterious it is! And what is it that suddenly opens the door into poetry? A face, a voice, two hours of rich communion and the world has changed. I am back in my real life again.

Just as intense joy can open her to her creative depths, so too for Sarton can intense pain open the way. As she says in *House by the Sea* (p. 203):

> Perhaps one must always feel absolutely naked and abandoned and desolate to be ready for the inner world to open again. Perhaps one has to *dare* that. This morning I feel better for having let the woe in, for admitting what I have tried for weeks to refuse to admit—loneliness like starvation.

As Sarton knows, "the inner world, the world of poetry, is as much nourished by the bad times as by anything." (*Plant Dreaming Deep*, p. 151) She knows as well (ibid., p. 94) that

> [a]t any moment solitude may put on the face of loneliness. Life here has

been, from the start, a challenge. And that is the point—not, perhaps, happiness, but life lived at its most aware and intense.

Loneliness is involved, not only in a solitary lifestyle, but also in every transition we make from involvement in the outer world to connection with our inner depths. As Sarton so beautifully puts it in *Plant Dreaming Deep* (p. 69):

> How brief yet how full that first encounter between my new life and its first guests! So much greater, then, the sense of absence when the house and I found ourselves alone together after they had gone. It was my first experience of the transition back to solitude, the moment of loneliness, the shadowy moment before I can resume my real life here. The metaphor that comes to mind is that of a sea anemone that has been wide open to the tide, and then slowly closes up again as the tide ebbs. For alone here, I must first give up the world and all its dear, tantalizing, human questions, first close myself away, and then, and only, then, open to that other tide, the inner life, the life of solitude, which rises very slowly until, like the anemone, I am open to receive whatever it may bring.
>
> It does not always bring happiness, but it always brings life of a special kind.

"Life of a special kind . . ."; ". . . not, perhaps, happiness, but life lived at its most aware and intense." These are the rewards of the willingness to move through loneliness into depth connection.

We do not need to adopt a solitary lifestyle to experience those challenges and rewards. What we do need to do is to make a sustained and disciplined effort—as Sarton herself had to do even in her aloneness—to "clear the space" into which God or the creative can flow. We must learn, through whatever discipline best suits our uniqueness, to stop the diffusion of our energies and to detach ourselves from our everyday concerns often enough and fully enough that we are available to be graced by Presence. In this journey Sarton's reflections can help light the way.

Out of a Single Fire: Sikhs and Quakers

The Sikh and Quaker movements were born at different times in different milieus. The Sikh movement is earlier by nearly two centuries; its founder Guru Nanak (1469-1539) lived at a period of close interaction in India between the Hindu and Islamic faiths; Quakerism was shaped in Christian Britain under the leadership of George Fox (1624-1691). Outwardly, Sikh and Quaker make a striking contrast. Sikhs are known as "trusty warriors," and the wearing of the *kirpan* (sword) is a symbol of their faith; Quakers discarded the sword which every English gentleman wore, and are known over as "trusty peacemakers." Yet beneath the surface these two religious minorities have some interesting similarities in doctrine and ethics.

A central religious principle of Quakerism is that a measure of God's Spirit is given to all mankind. This issues in a church order based on the faith that every individual is potentially able to seek and attain unity with the Supreme Light; therefore there is "the priesthood of all believers," a rejection of outward rituals, and the practice of a human equality which includes women also. Quaker tradition unites personal piety and social righteousness in one whole.

Sikhism too holds that each human soul has in it a spark of the Divine, and that to realise this truth and so attain the realisation of God is the ultimate end of human life. Sikhs diverge from the Hindu and Islamic traditions and come close to Quakers in believing that this realisation is not limited to ascetic hermits or closed to *qafirs* (unbelievers), but is attainable in the ordinary life of a householder. They refuse to divide life into "sacred" and "secular"; they share the Quaker faith in the potentially sacramental nature of the whole of life.

The emphasis on the Divine Light in every individual leads Sikhs like Quakers to treat women on an equal footing with men in both sacred and secular spheres. So Guru Nanak declared that woman is to be venerated. Both Sikhs and Quakers arose in societies that discriminated against woman as a temptress, a source of evil, at best a lovely weakling whom man must protect and possess. But out of 59 British Quakers who braved hardship to preach their message in America between 1656 and 1663 as

Reprinted with the Permission of "The Friendly Way," published by the Religious Society of Friends in India.

many as 27 were women; Margaret Fell, the widow who married George Fox in 1669, gave outstanding service to the Quaker movement.

Both Sikhs and Quakers think of the spark of Divine Light in humanity as an inward guide, and the final religious authority. The *sabda* or Word within is the divine incarnation, and everyone is inherently capable of assimilating it. Neither Sikhs nor Quakers therefore have any special priestly class; anyone among the Sikhs may read the Scriptures and address the congregation; any Quaker may speak in the Meeting or offer prayer. Both Sikhs and Quakers regard external symbols as futile without the inward experience of Divine presence and love. "Religion," declared Guru Nanak, "does not consist of a patched coat or yogi's staff, of a body shaven or smeared with ashes, of ear-rings or the blowing of horns." For Quakers baptism and communion are essentially spiritual experiences; the outward symbols of water, bread and wine are not necessary. The inward experience of the One God, for both Sikhs and Quakers, leaves no room for pride, it calls for humility and sincerity.

For both Sikhs and Quakers, true religion must be lived, daily. "Truth is high, but higher still is truthful living," said Guru Nanak. So Quakers are watchful against "disloyalty to truth," and an alert conscience made them pioneers against slavery, and for a righteous State government in Pennsylvania, and in struggles for social justice today. The three cardinal virtues which every Sikh should imbibe are *Kirt Karni*: to earn by the sweat of one's brow; *nam japna*: to meditate on the Name of God; and *wand chhakna*: to share the fruits of one's labour with the needy.

We may close with a hymn of Guru Gobind Singh:

As out of a single fire, millions of sparks arise—
Arise in separation, but come together again
When they fall back into the fire—
So from God's Being emerge alive and inanimate things,
And since they arise from Him
They shall return unto Him again.
Dharam Singh

To belong to Allah
is to see in your own existence
something that is neither yours or from your self—
something you have on loan.
It is to see your being in God's Being.
your subsistence in God's Substance,
Your strength in God's Strength.
Ibn Abbad of Ronda (1332-1390)

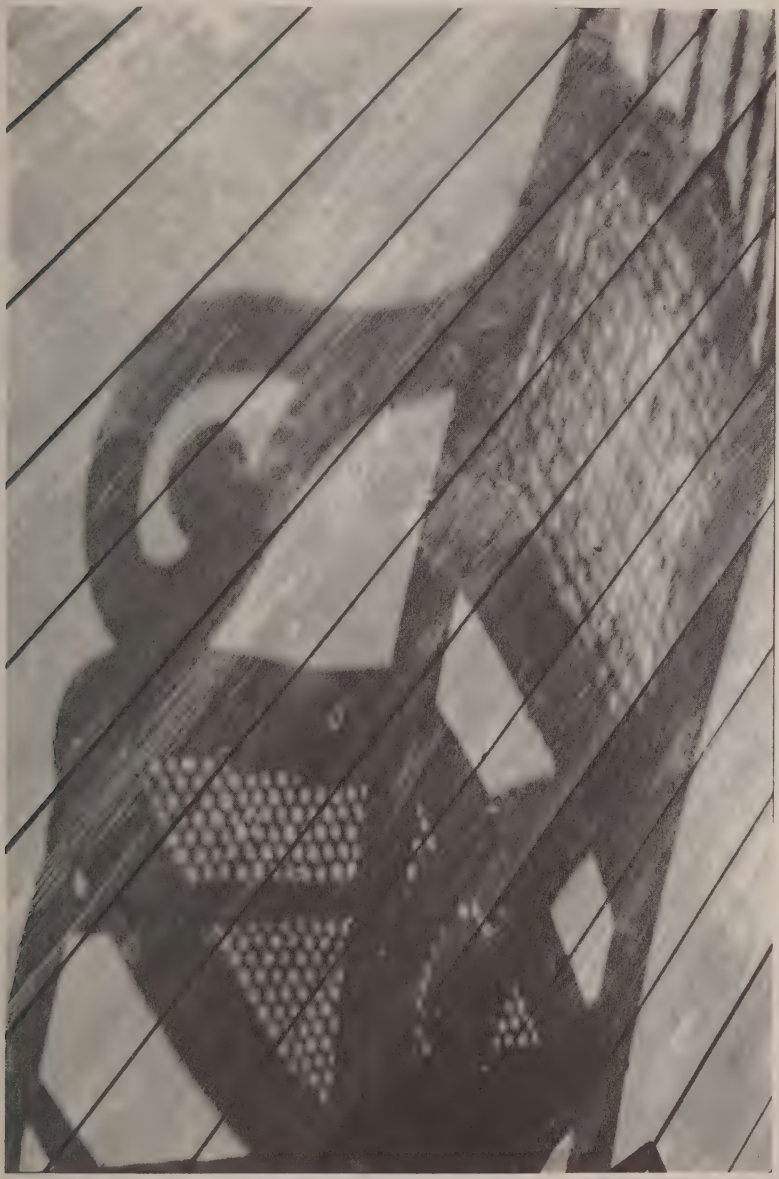
A Year in Prison

SHEILA PARKS

A woman imprisoned because of political activity relates that a year of intense and lonely suffering has resulted in "deep inner healing" and multi-dimensional growth. Like Letty Hillesum, who died in a Nazi concentration camp, the author became closer to God as her pain increased, instead of more distant.

My faith has deepened . . . I feel better, am better than I have ever been before . . . I have grown emotionally and spiritually . . . I have made some lifelong friends . . . I have been part of some major prison reform that still continues . . . The contradictions abound: It is my faith in God, the journey of my soul, and the urgency of the times that leads me to do a Plowshares. The more I concentrate on my soul's journey—the only journey there is—the better and more healed my outer life is. I have been in an excruciatingly painful and very deep inner healing for the last 15 months (7 months before prison, 8 while in prison). This healing has culminated now and that is why I am better than ever. The more I concentrate on my outer life—the Plowshares action, trial, and prison—the better my work on my inner life is, the more my inner life gets healed. Prison has been a great blessing from God in that She has given me the time and place to work on myself that is not available in the outside world and/or that I do not take so completely while outside. And in prison the issues get raised in a much more stark way than they could ever be raised outside. The inner and outer are inextricably entwined . . . A year in prison is a relatively short time and my life here is certainly not anything like being murdered, tortured, or raped in Central America, the Mideast, South Africa. On the other hand, most people in the peace movement do not want to do even a year in prison. I do not want to say, "Ho hum, it was nothing." It is an intense experience even for a year . . . Although my heart and soul are freer than they have ever been, I miss being physically free a lot. On the other hand, they would not be so free without doing the Plowshares and without doing the inner healing . . . I am keenly aware (from furloughs) of how good it is to sit with friends,

Sheila Parks of Medford, Massachusetts, a former college teacher, is finishing a year-long prison sentence for taking part in a non-violent action on behalf of nuclear disarmament.



Tom Dunham

have a cup of tea, take a walk, be—on my own time and in my own time. I am institutionalized, of course, and in some ways that is not so bad, I discover. If I were aware on a daily basis, in a sensory way, of what I was missing outside, I think the pain would be unbearable. It is kind of like an out-of-body experience when the physical pain gets too great. At best this prison is petty and trivial. At worst, it is illegal and immoral—evil. In here it is very easily seen that what is done to one of us is done to all of us. We women in here have each other, though, and that is a lot, for the women who choose or are lucky enough or ready enough to become deep friends with one another. There are some few officers I really like . . . This place has tested every spiritual and emotional belief I have, the hardest tests I have ever had. Although my scores have been all over the spectrum, for the most part it has brought out the best in me. My belief and practice in non-violence has deepened. It works, it really works. Sometimes it is very hard. Being emotionally honest with myself and others really works. Being open and vulnerable really works. I can remain true to myself even in prison. All the spiritual and emotional truths remain true in prison. I appreciate people I love on the outside more. Most friends on the outside have been so loving I am grateful and moved beyond words. It has brought out the best in many friends also. I am very sad about society and the human condition (our shadow side) and painfully aware of how much we need structural, systemic, institutionalized changes and how much we all need to work on ourselves and change if we really are to have peace. On the other hand, all the love and generosity I have been given from friends and from other people make me more in love with the human race than ever before. And with nature. And with God.

Poetry and Illustrations

MARY ALICE REID

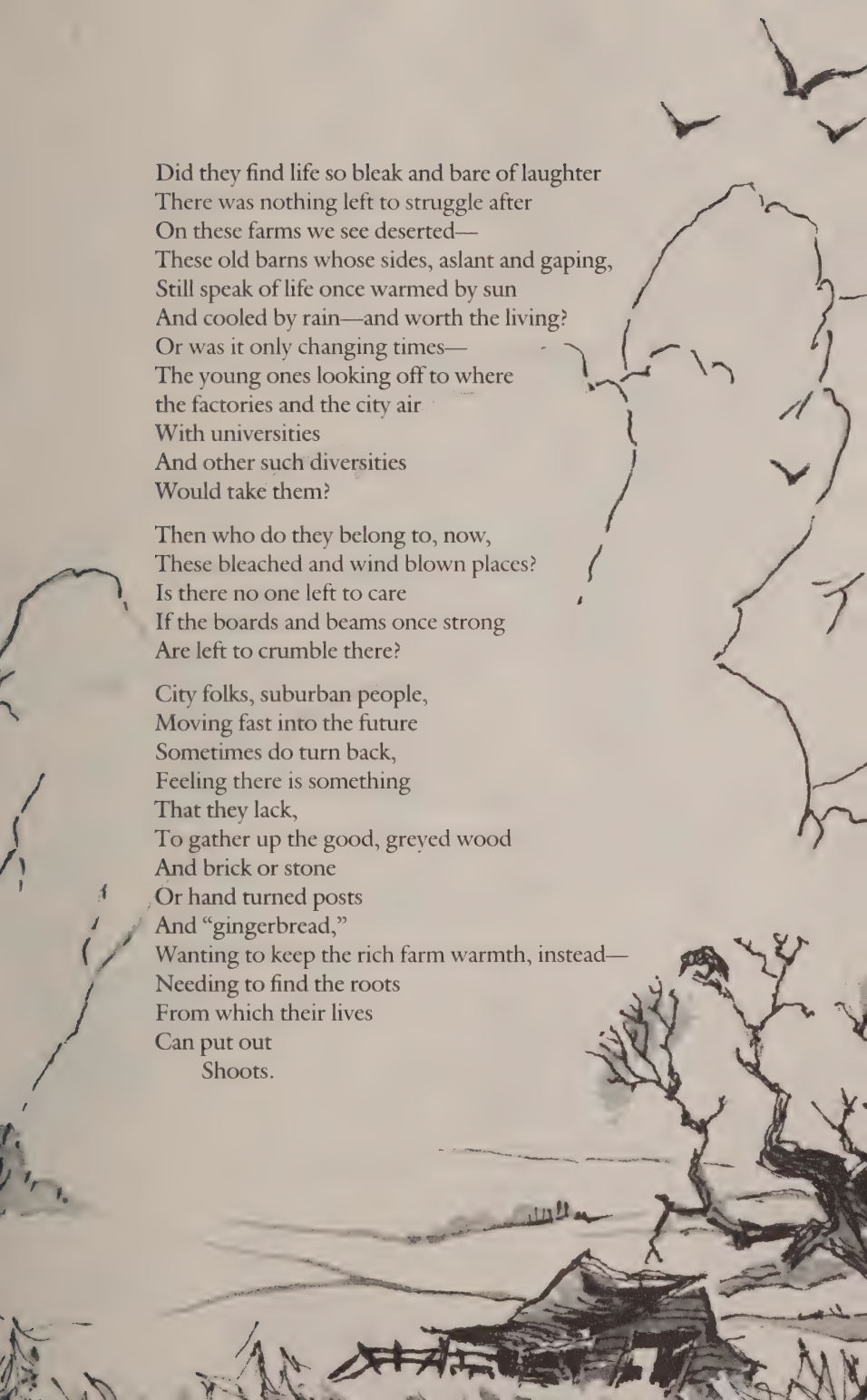
Mary Alice Reid, an Illinois poet and artist, did her early training at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago. From her studio on the near-north side of Chicago, she freelanced as a children's book illustrator, wrote poetry, and exhibited in the Fine Arts field. Her art work has been shown regularly ever since in galleries, art fairs, and competitions, and now hangs in private and public collections throughout the United States. She is the inventor of well-known children's toys, and her poetry has won a long series of local and national awards too numerous to cite.

Desolate

Desolate in the land
The old farm houses stand,
Their people gone away
In time and other places.

Where are they
Who left their buildings
Gaunt and greying into bleakness?
Why is there no one any more
To shout and stamp across the floor
With life producing vigor, still?
Did they simply walk away
And leave their houses, cribs and sheds that way
Standing tattered, now—
And leaning slowly down
Until they fall upon the ground?

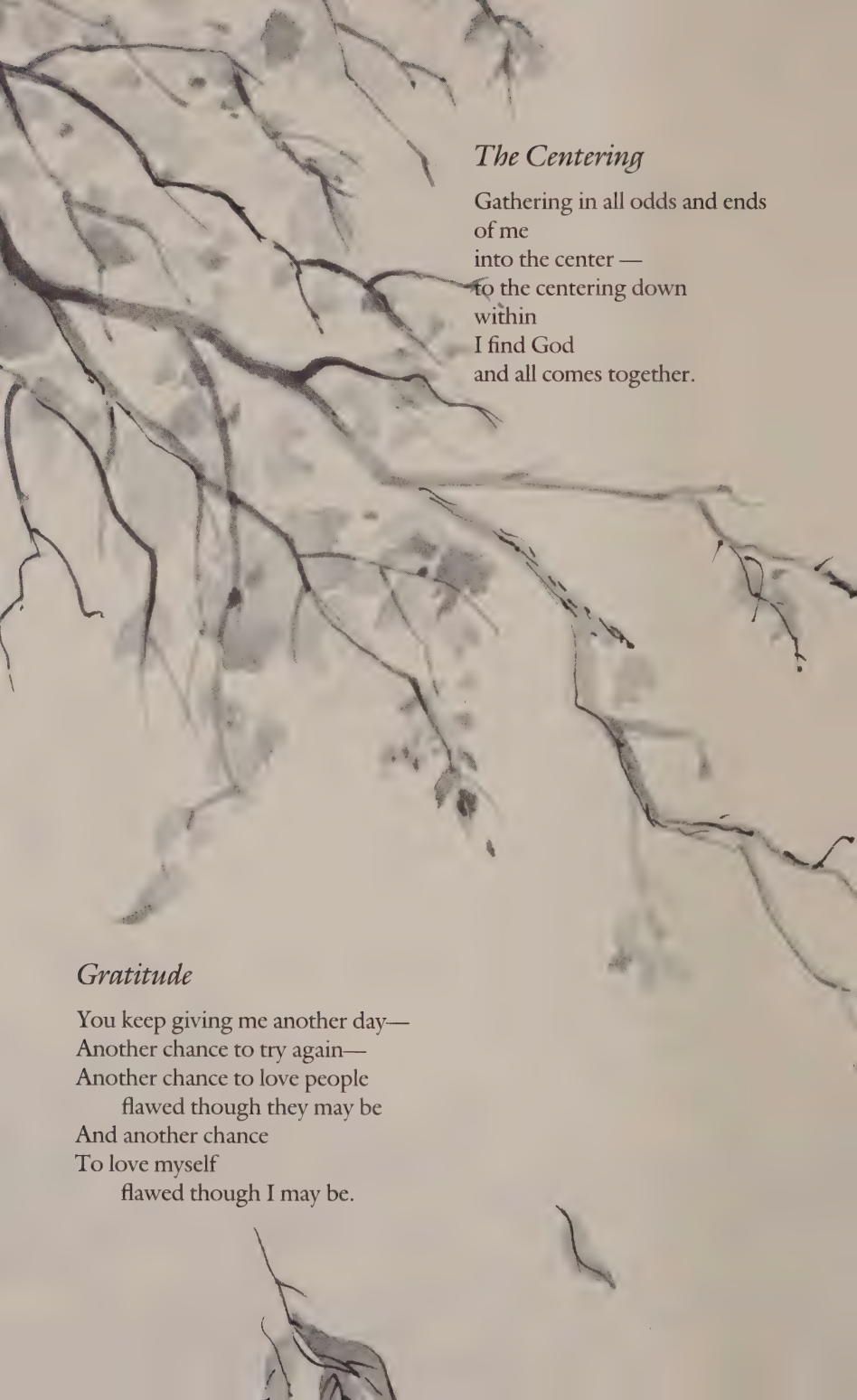
Wind and rain have found
Their way through clapboard, board and batten—
Even knocked the fence posts down.



Did they find life so bleak and bare of laughter
There was nothing left to struggle after
On these farms we see deserted—
These old barns whose sides, aslant and gaping,
Still speak of life once warmed by sun
And cooled by rain—and worth the living?
Or was it only changing times—
The young ones looking off to where
the factories and the city air
With universities
And other such diversities
Would take them?

Then who do they belong to, now,
These bleached and wind blown places?
Is there no one left to care
If the boards and beams once strong
Are left to crumble there?

City folks, suburban people,
Moving fast into the future
Sometimes do turn back,
Feeling there is something
That they lack,
To gather up the good, greyed wood
And brick or stone
Or hand turned posts
And "gingerbread,"
Wanting to keep the rich farm warmth, instead—
Needing to find the roots
From which their lives
Can put out
Shoots.

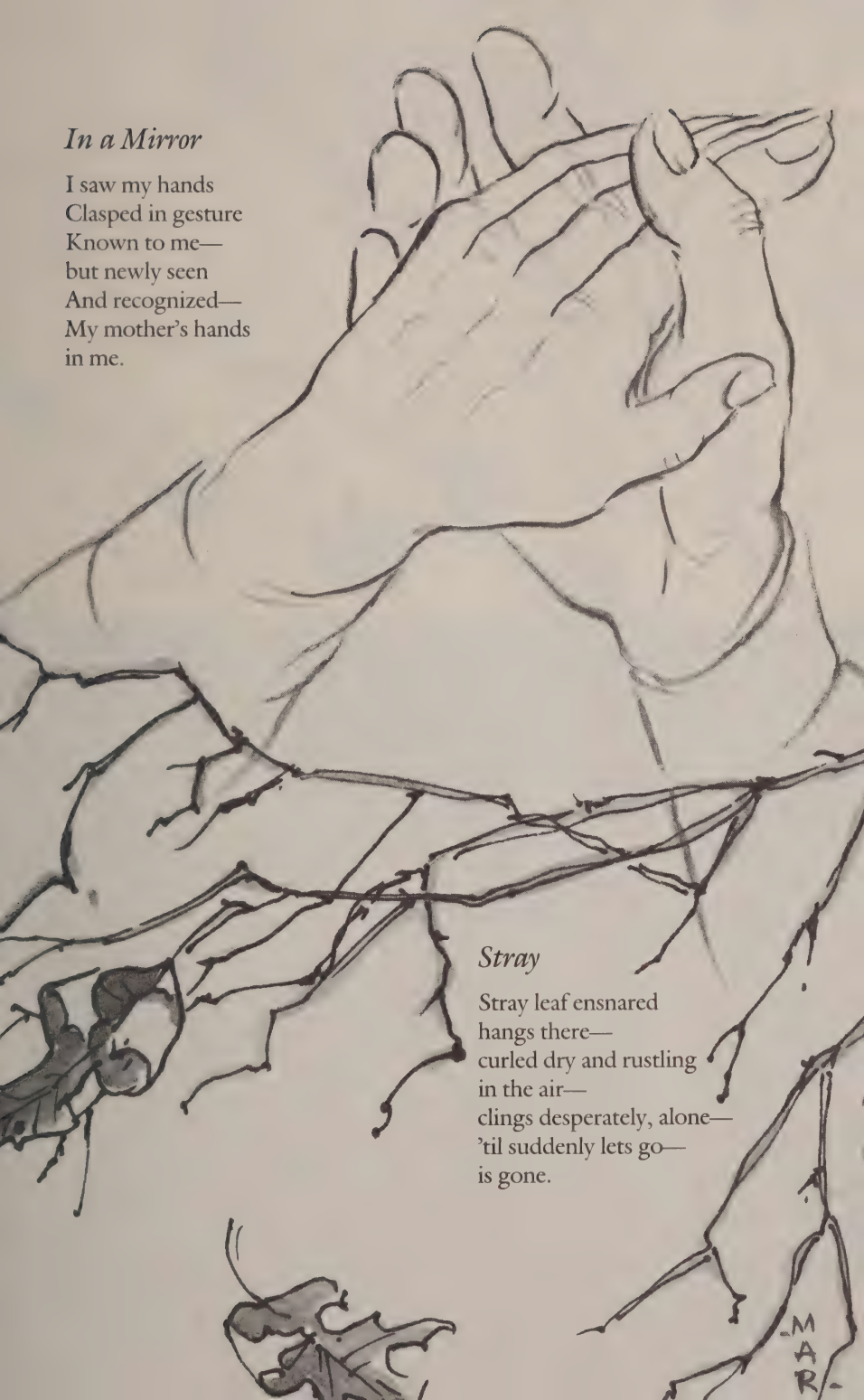


The Centering

Gathering in all odds and ends
of me
into the center —
to the centering down
within
I find God
and all comes together.

Gratitude

You keep giving me another day—
Another chance to try again—
Another chance to love people
    flawed though they may be
And another chance
To love myself
    flawed though I may be.



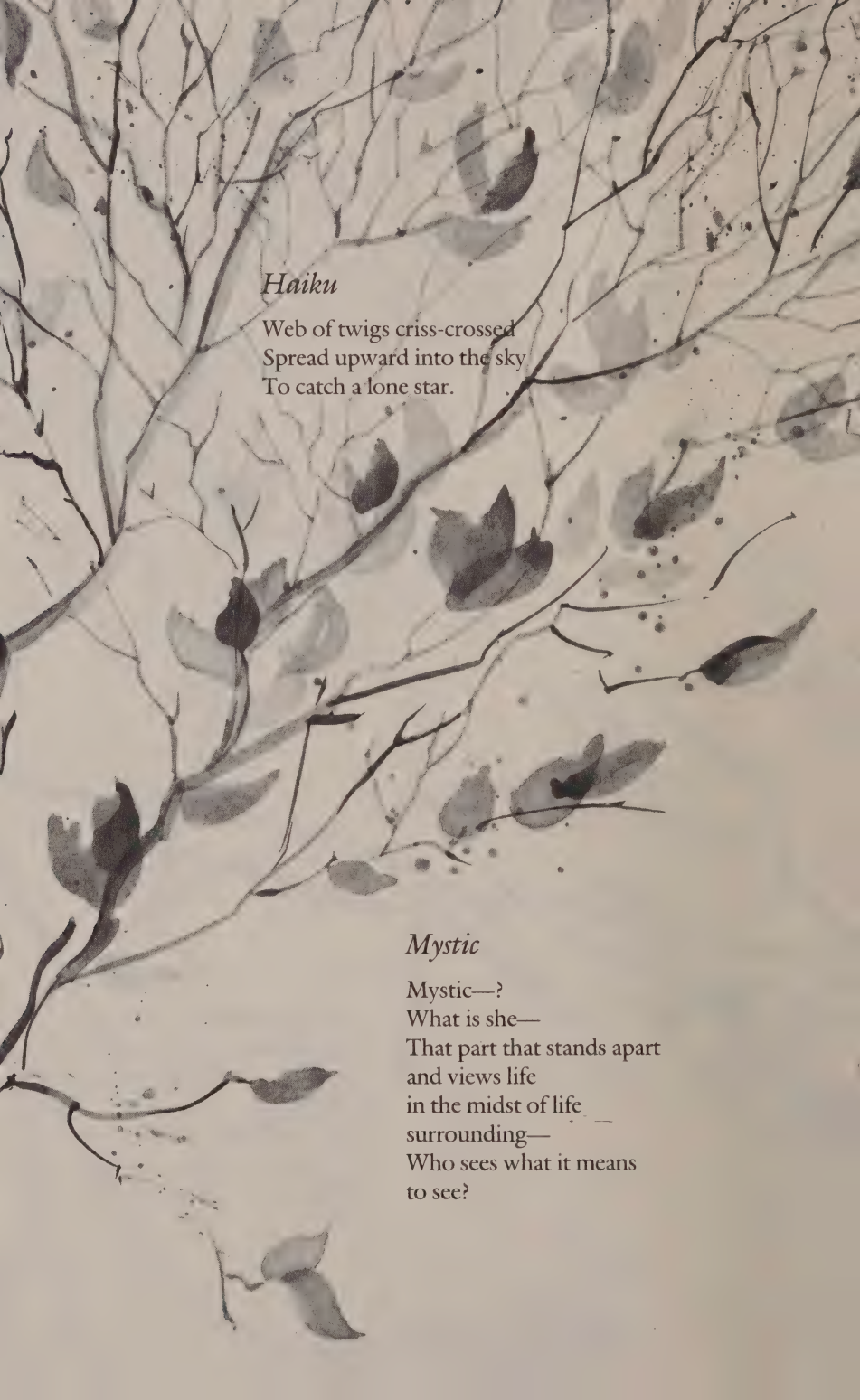
In a Mirror

I saw my hands
Clasped in gesture
Known to me—
but newly seen
And recognized—
My mother's hands
in me.

Stray

Stray leaf ensnared
hangs there—
curled dry and rustling
in the air—
clings desperately, alone—
'til suddenly lets go—
is gone.

-MAR-



Haiku

Web of twigs criss-crossed
Spread upward into the sky
To catch a lone star.

Mystic

Mystic—?
What is she—
That part that stands apart
and views life
in the midst of life
surrounding—
Who sees what it means
to see?

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